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ABSTRACT

This publication identifies common attitudes toward handicapped persons and provides suggestions for improving attitudes. The first of three major sections presents an historical review of pertinent legislation for education of the handicapped. Section 2 gives a brief review of what the legislation means for vocational education. The final section expounds upon the attitudes of educators, peers, parents, and the community. In addition, suggestions for improving attitudes within each group are given. (LRA)

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Research & Development Series No. 174

"It Isn't Easy Being Special"

I LIKE YOU WHEN I KNOW YOU:

Attitudinal Barriers to Responsive Vocational Education For Handicapped Students

Lynn Brant

CE 023 913

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210
1979

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

Parents, teachers, counselors, legislators, paraprofessionals, volunteers, administrators, and the community at large must all have positive attitudes toward people who are "special." This publication identifies some common attitudes we all have toward handicapped persons and provides suggestions for improving our attitudes. It also includes an historical review of pertinent legislation for education of the handicapped.

I Like You When I Know You: Attitudinal Barriers to Responsive Vocational Education for Handicapped Students is one of a series of National Center publications devoted to issues, problems, and answers in serving the special needs learner. This ongoing series, IT ISN'T EASY BEING SPECIAL, reflects the National Center's commitment to improving vocational education programs and services for special needs populations.

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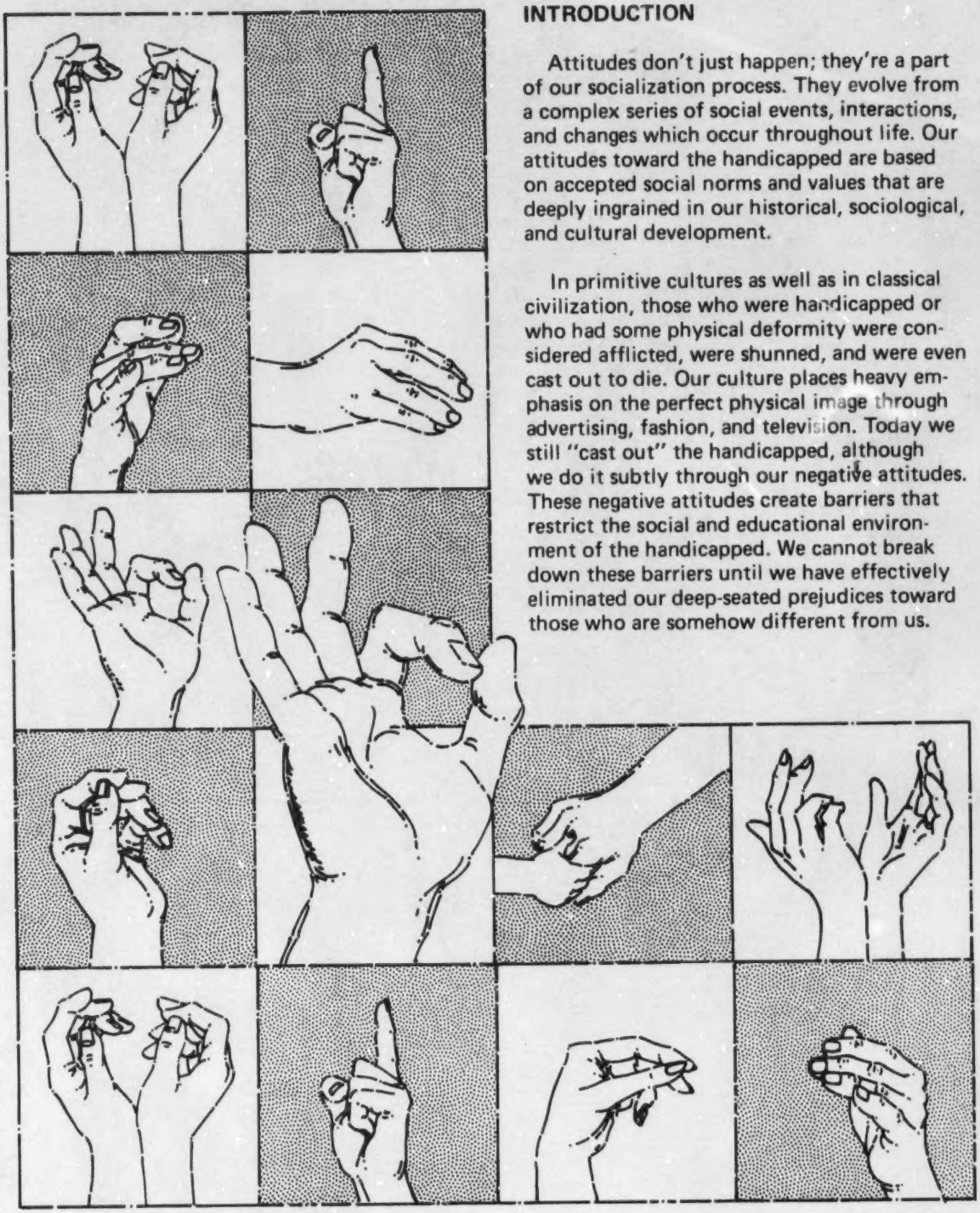
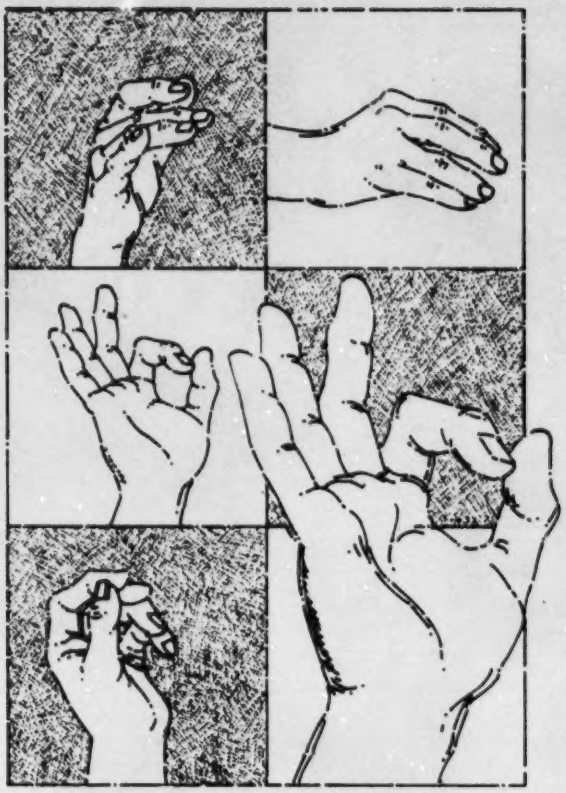


INTRODUCTION

Attitudes don't just happen; they're a part of our socialization process. They evolve from a complex series of social events, interactions, and changes which occur throughout life. Our attitudes toward the handicapped are based on accepted social norms and values that are deeply ingrained in our historical, sociological, and cultural development.

In primitive cultures as well as in classical civilization, those who were handicapped or who had some physical deformity were considered afflicted, were shunned, and were even cast out to die. Our culture places heavy emphasis on the perfect physical image through advertising, fashion, and television. Today we still "cast out" the handicapped, although we do it subtly through our negative attitudes. These negative attitudes create barriers that restrict the social and educational environment of the handicapped. We cannot break down these barriers until we have effectively eliminated our deep-seated prejudices toward those who are somehow different from us.



A REVIEW OF LEGISLATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED

Governmental involvement in and concern with the education of the special needs learner reflects progress in our attitudes toward the handicapped. Through gradual legislative commitment, we have progressed from an attitude of neglect to a conscious effort to end the exclusion of the special needs learner from the educational mainstream.

Legislation generally reflects the ideals of social order. Policies and legislation for the handicapped reflect our changing ideals toward the rights and requirements of the special needs learner. Prior to 1900, special provisions for educating the handicapped were rare; such arrangements were made on a private and individual basis. Subsequently, there was a gradual decline in the tendency to isolate the handicapped socially and educationally. By the late 19th century, there was some recognition of federal responsibility for educating the handicapped. Minimal federal involvement, however, continued well into the twentieth century.

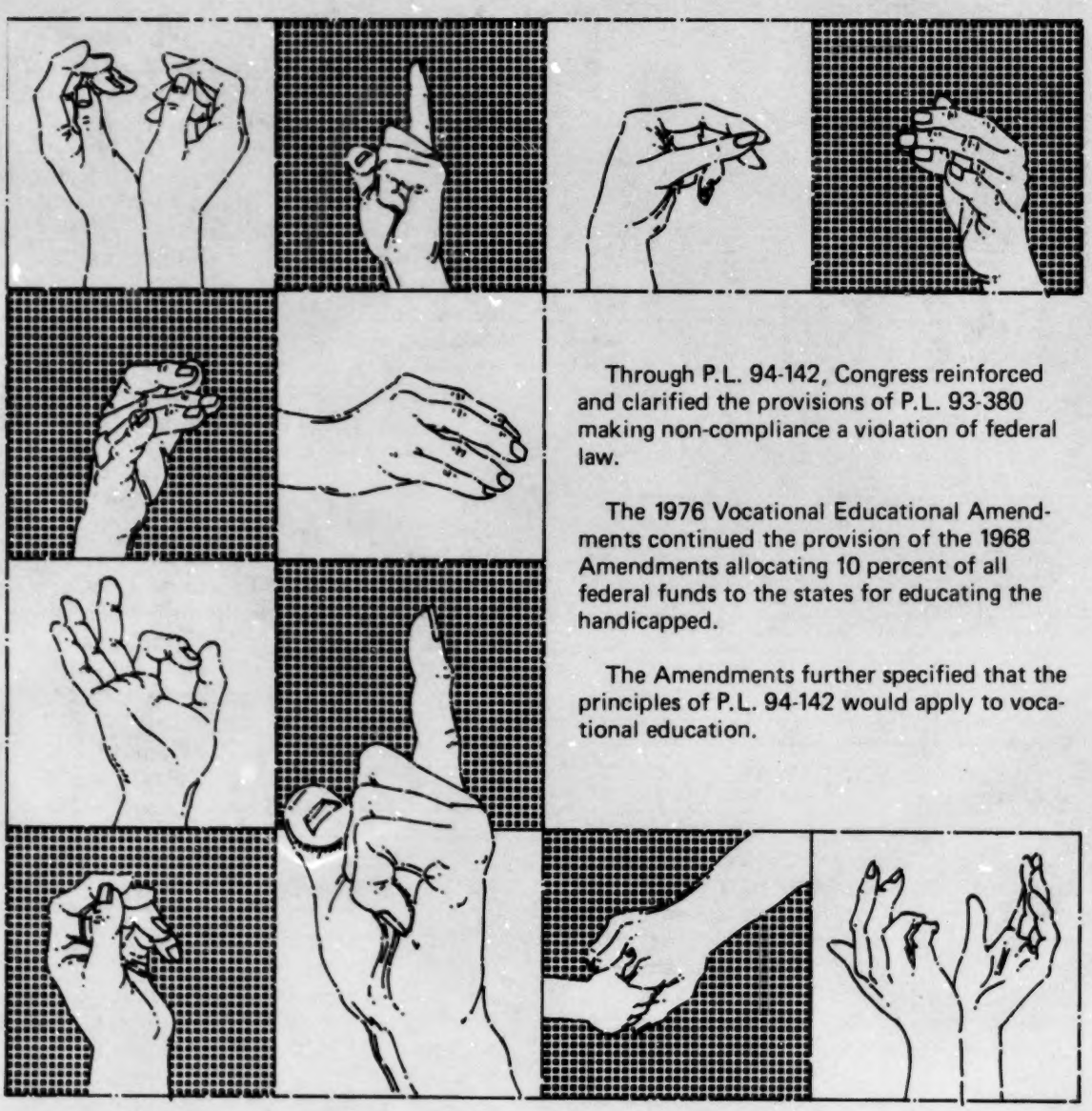
The establishment of Gallaudet College for the Deaf in 1864 and Congress' allocation of $10,000 nationwide for books and materials for the blind in 1879 were the highlights of aid to special needs learners in the 19th century. Extensive federal involvement in education for the handicapped began with the establishment of USOE's Section on Exceptional Children and Youth in 1931. The Cooperative Research Act (P.L. 83-531) in 1954 signified the first step toward support for research on specific handicapping conditions. Categorical aid advanced with the Captioned Films for the Deaf Act in 1958; further momentum was provided by the 1961 Act to Train Teachers of the Deaf.

The 1963 Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act was of major importance in funding the education of children with all categories of handicaps. It was not until the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968, however, that the handicapped were specifically mentioned in vocational education legislation.

The Education of the Handicapped Amendments of 1974 (P.L. 93-380), also called "A Bill of Rights for the Handicapped", introduced the philosophy of mainstreaming, making clear a child's right to a free public education between the ages of 3 and 21.

This law further qualified mainstreaming to include the concept of "least restrictive alternative"—states were mandated to educate the handicapped in regular classes unless the nature and severity of the handicap, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, prevented satisfactory educational achievement.

P.L. 94-142, The Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975, represented the zenith of federal involvement in the education of the handicapped, because it mandated the provision of a written Individualized Education Program for each child. Through an IEP, the educational needs of a child and the educational services required to meet those needs are clearly defined by a team including the local education agency representative, the regular teacher, special education teacher, counselor, parents, the student, and others as appropriate.



Through P.L. 94-142, Congress reinforced and clarified the provisions of P.L. 93-380 making non-compliance a violation of federal law.

The 1976 Vocational Educational Amendments continued the provision of the 1968 Amendments allocating 10 percent of all federal funds to the states for educating the handicapped.

The Amendments further specified that the principles of P.L. 94-142 would apply to vocational education.

The following chart provides highlights from the legislative history of education for special needs learners.

A CHRONOLOGY –

EDUCATIONAL LEGISLATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED

1864 ESTABLISHMENT OF GALLAUDET COLLEGE FOR THE DEAF

1897 BOOK AND MATERIALS FUND FOR THE BLIND

1931 SECTION ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH established in the U.S. Office of Education

1954 P.L. 83-531 – COOPERATIVE RESEARCH ACT provided research grants to institutions of higher education and to states

1958 CAPTIONED FILMS FOR THE DEAF ACT – films to enrich cultural and recreational opportunities for the deaf; represented the beginning of categorical aid.

1961 ACT TO TRAIN TEACHERS OF THE DEAF

1963 MENTAL RETARDATION FACILITIES AND COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTERS CONSTRUCTION ACT

1965 THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT (ESEA) provided funding for the educationally disadvantaged with handicaps

1966 TITLE VI OF ESEA mandated state responsibility for initiating, expanding, and improving programs for handicapped children by
1. establishing a National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children
2. establishing the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped

1967 AMENDMENTS TO ESEA
1. provided Regional Resource Centers to carry on research and development
2. provided support for the handicapped by establishing Regional Deaf/Blind Centers

1968 1) P.L. 90-480 – ACCESSIBILITY OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS TO THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED ACT – eliminated architectural barriers
2) HANDICAPPED CHILDREN'S EARLY EDUCATION ASSISTANCE ACT – education for pre-school handicapped children
3) AMENDMENTS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ACT – 10% of allocation to States used for education of the handicapped; marked first specific mandate for vocational education for the handicapped

1969 1) NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL MEDIA AND MATERIALS FOR THE HANDICAPPED established
2) EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED ACT consolidated all legislation pertaining to the selection of handicapped individuals through amendments to the ESEA of 1975

1973 P.L. 93-111 – THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973–SECTION 504 – public schools and postsecondary vocational education programs mandated to provide appropriate educational services regardless of nature or severity of handicap

SECTION 503 – Required employers with federal contracts to institute affirmative action procedures by recruiting, training, hiring, and promoting qualified handicapped persons.

1974 P.L. 93-380 – THE EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED AMENDMENTS – "A bill of rights for the handicapped" – identification systems and confidentiality provisions
1. emphasized the right of all children to a free public education
2. introduced the philosophy of mainstreaming and the concept of "least restrictive alternative"

1975 P.L. 94-142 – THE EDUCATION FOR ALL HANDICAPPED CHILDREN ACT
1. increased the federal role in educating the handicapped
2. mandated stricter compliance
3. required an IEP (Individualized Education Program) to specify individual needs and services for each child

1976 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AMENDMENTS
1. continued 10% allocation of federal funds for the handicapped
2. applied the principles of P.L. 94-142 to vocational education

WHAT DOES THE LEGISLATION MEAN FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION?

Key Legislation

Vocational Education Amendments of 1968
- first specific mention of the handicapped in vocational education legislation

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – P.L. 93-111
- postsecondary vocational education programs to provide appropriate educational services to the handicapped

Education of the Handicapped Amendments of 1974 – P.L. 93-380
- vocational education included in mainstreaming and least restrictive alternative requirements

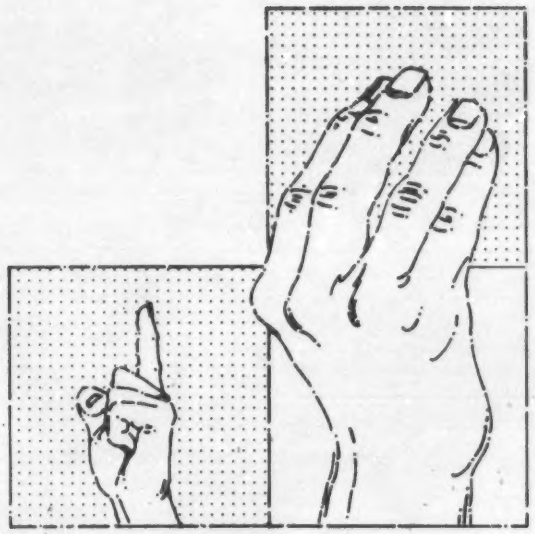
Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 – P.L. 94-142
- reinforced P.L. 93-380
- required IEP(s) for both general and vocational programs

Vocational Education Amendments of 1976
- specifically apply principles of P.L. 94-142 to vocational education

Vocational educators must be prepared to serve all handicapped students in regular classes as well as in special classes; they must provide adequate equipment, materials, support services and adequately trained staff. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Work Programs (WPs) must be prepared and implemented for each student. These are required by law; however, attitudes toward the handicapped that create barriers as real as physical obstacles cannot be overlooked.

ATTITUDES

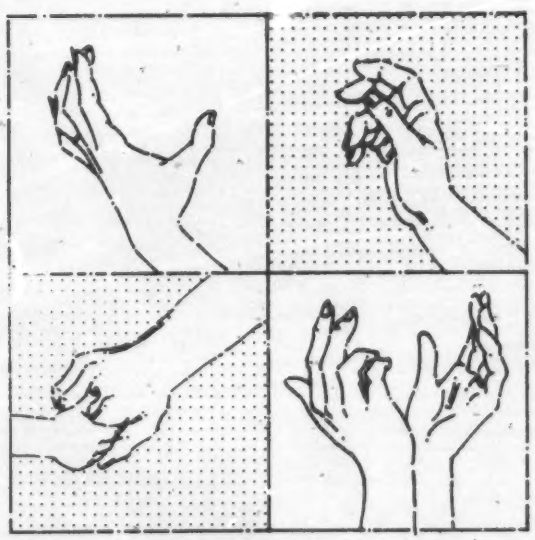
Educators, peers, parents, and the community all have a significant influence on the social and educational development of any child. Because handicapped students are special, positive attitudes toward their potential for achievement both in the classroom and in society are most critical.



ATTITUDES – EDUCATORS

Vocational educators share the common goal of everyone in education to identify and to remove barriers that restrict the learning environment and that prevent the student from reaching maximum potential.

- teachers
- counselors
- principals
- paraprofessionals
- volunteers
- support staff



What influences their attitudes?

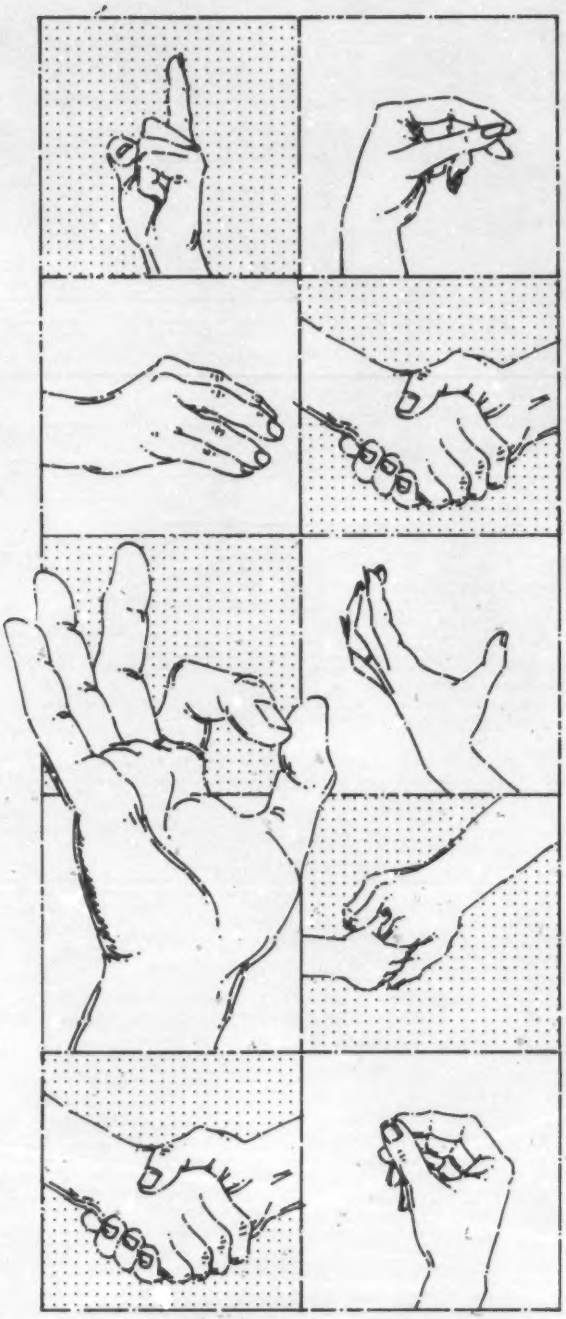
Let's look at some of the things that influence the development of attitudes toward the handicapped student.

- knowledge of handicapping conditions
- sense of security or sense of control over our environment
- contact with handicapped persons
- confidence in working effectively with the handicapped
- satisfaction in having helped the handicapped to learn and to grow
- adequate training for working with the handicapped
- favorable acceptance of the handicapped
- recognition of the ability of the handicapped to make a positive social and personal adjustment and to become self-sufficient

Here are some suggestions for improving attitudes:

The school, through planning, sharing information, and training can aid staff in developing more positive attitudes toward the handicapped.

- correct misconceptions about handicapped students and their capabilities
- erase fear of hurting or harming the handicapped
- realize that the handicapped do not create a safety problem in vocational areas
- motivate teachers to avail themselves of additional training to meet the particular needs of the handicapped
- increase support personnel and services
- actively seek funding to purchase needed equipment and materials
- allow teachers sufficient time to prepare instructional materials geared to the handicapped student
- make all physical facilities and equipment accessible to the handicapped



ATTITUDES – PEERS

As handicapped students are mainstreamed in regular classrooms, positive attitudes of their non-handicapped peers will help them to adjust and will improve the quality of their educational experience.

- friends
- classmates
- acquaintances

How do they typically feel?

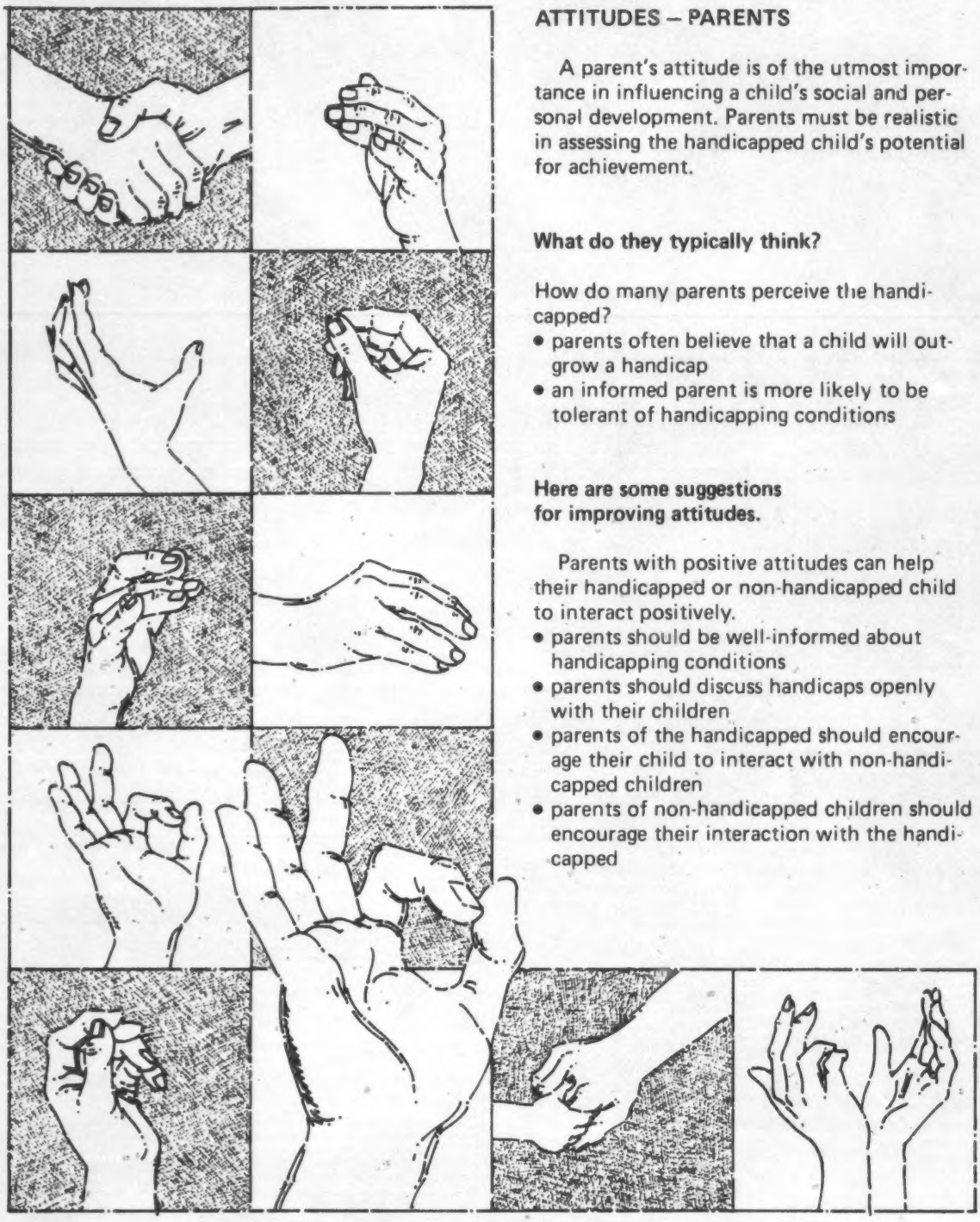
What are some of the more common attitudes that non-handicapped children have toward their handicapped peers?

- children often reject or pity the handicapped
- they perceive physical handicaps as a greater stigma than ethnic differences
- intellectually superior children tend to regard the handicapped negatively
- younger children tend to have more neutral feelings toward the handicapped
- the educational level of the parent affects a child's attitude toward the handicapped
- the child of parents who accept the handicapped is more likely to accept handicapping condition

Here are some suggestions for improving their attitudes.

Appropriate learning experiences and the right classroom atmosphere will foster positive attitudes of non-handicapped students toward their handicapped peers.

- plan interaction among handicapped and non-handicapped students to promote cooperative group contact
- plan integrated learning experiences for both groups
- develop appropriate curricula and activities
- provide assistance for teachers from paraprofessionals
- ensure that facilities and equipment are accessible to the handicapped



ATTITUDES – PARENTS

A parent's attitude is of the utmost importance in influencing a child's social and personal development. Parents must be realistic in assessing the handicapped child's potential for achievement.

What do they typically think?

How do many parents perceive the handicapped?

- parents often believe that a child will outgrow a handicap
- an informed parent is more likely to be tolerant of handicapping conditions

Here are some suggestions for improving attitudes.

Parents with positive attitudes can help their handicapped or non-handicapped child to interact positively.

- parents should be well-informed about handicapping conditions
- parents should discuss handicaps openly with their children
- parents of the handicapped should encourage their child to interact with non-handicapped children
- parents of non-handicapped children should encourage their interaction with the handicapped

ATTITUDES – THE COMMUNITY

Both handicapped and non-handicapped persons live in the same community. Positive attitudes of employers allow the handicapped to function as productive members of the community.

- employers

How do they view the handicapped?

Let's look at the way some employers view the handicapped.

- their attitudes often reflect the community's attitude about the ability of the handicapped to adjust to work
- employers with positive attitudes toward the handicapped tend to be more flexible in their hiring practices
- employers who see value in employing the handicapped are willing to provide necessary training and other accommodations

Here are some suggestions for improving attitudes.

Employing the handicapped provides an opportunity for them to make a meaningful contribution to the community.

- provide factual information on handicapping conditions to both employer and employees
- encourage interaction among handicapped and non-handicapped employees
- encourage employers to contact special schools and rehabilitation agencies
- promote flexible hiring practices
- make employers aware that the handicapped are capable of performing effectively without excessive supervision

CONCLUSION – WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Attitudes are often based on misinformation or fear of the unknown. To change negative attitudes toward the handicapped, we must analyze and understand our negative reactions. Negative attitudes often create barriers to accepting people who are different from us. If we recognize these barriers, we can eliminate them and accept the abilities as well as the limitations of special people.

When we accept the fact that being different is not a handicap, special people will realize their potential and exercise their right to make a meaningful contribution to society. After all, each of us finds that circumstances at various times in our lives make us "special". We need and appreciate all the help and understanding we can get because there are times when we are all "special".

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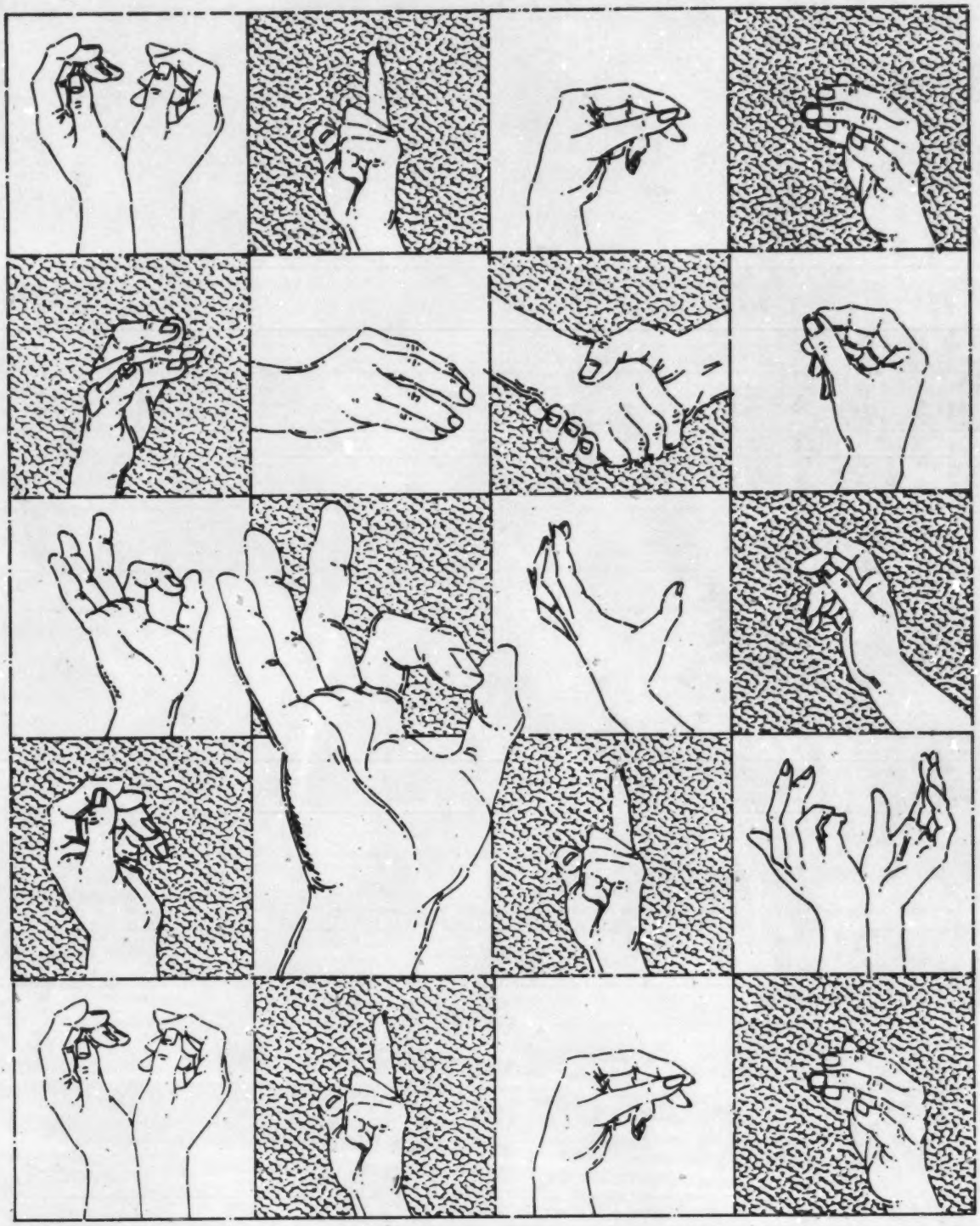

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